



UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

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**U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing**

**Deteriorating Religious Freedom Conditions in Cuba**

**Wednesday June 18, 2023**

**10:30 AM-12:00PM ET**

**American Museum of the Cuban Diaspora**

**Stephen Schneck, USCIRF Commissioner:**

Thank you, Commissioner Wolf. It's great to be with you all today.

USCIRF is required by Congress to maintain a list of certain victims of religious persecution, including those imprisoned due to their faith-based activity or religious freedom advocacy. To fulfill that mandate, we created the Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Victims List, which you can find on our website.

There are currently eight Cubans on the FoRB Victims List, four Protestants and four Santeria practitioners who are members of the independent and unregistered Free Yoruba Association of Cuba. I would like to take a moment to highlight one case that is illustrative of the Cuban government's crackdown on people of faith.

Reverend Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo of the independent Monte de Sion Independent Church participated in the July 11, 2021 protests. Authorities detained him that day. In the months since his detention, Rosales Fajardo endured beatings, degrading treatment by prison guards, and the denial of familial contact. The government sought to impose a 10-year sentence and tried him in December on charges of “disrespect,” “assault,” “criminal incitement,” and “public disorder.” Rosales Fajardo was sentenced to eight years in prison, though his sentence was reduced by one year in May. In June of last year, it was reported that Rosales Fajardo's appeal had been rejected. His wife has been threatened with imprisonment herself if she continues to speak out publicly about her husband's case. The government has targeted the pastor for over a decade because of his leadership of an unregistered church in the city of Palma Soriano. In 2009, government authorities confiscated his family home, which also served as their church. According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide, the same officer who was involved in the confiscation now holds a position in the Ministry of the Interior and was responsible for the decision to charge and imprison Pastor Lorenzo. Rosales Fajardo’s story is one that is too common in Cuba.

If you know of any individuals who have been targeted due to their faith-based activity or advocacy in Cuba and should be included on USCIRF's FORB Victims List, I invite you to log onto the USCIRF website and submit information for us to review.

I will now turn it back over to Vice Chair Davie.